



Guidance Notes for providing Safe Ministry

C/2.1.1.1

Purpose

This is a guide to assist congregations and faith communities to implement the Safe Church Policy.

Scope

This document provides guidance and support to the designated Safe Church Coordinator or person or persons, undertaking the role or tasks below at the relevant congregation or faith community. The information in this document complements the [Overseeing Safe Ministry procedure](#).

Suggested use

Each congregation or faith community is encouraged to nominate a person or persons to take on the duties and roles described below. Many congregations and faith communities have a designated Safe Church Coordinator.

Mandatory Reporting

1. The Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents and the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers](#) outlines the steps to take when reporting incidents of suspected abuse, grooming sexual abuse or neglect, using the [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) and the [Guide for Reporting Child Safety Concerns](#) if applicable. This will ensure you are meeting your legal obligations and fulfilling your duty of care to the children and vulnerable people involved in your activities. A copy of each of these documents is available on the synod [website](#).

Mandatory Screening

2. All lay workers and volunteers **must** undergo [pre-appointment](#) screening and be appointed by the Church Council. All child-related roles **also** require the worker to comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy.
3. [Pre-appointment](#) screening is required for working with vulnerable people. All workers, are required to be deemed as suitable to apply for a Blue Card.
4. All persons with a negative notice or excluded or disqualified from requesting a Blue Card check from any state or territory of Australia are not permitted to work or volunteer with children and vulnerable people.

Definitions

5. Vulnerable

- 5.1. The following descriptions have been provided to assist in forming a shared understanding of 'vulnerable'. Vulnerability may occur at a specific point in time due to personal crisis, noting that some people may identify themselves as not being vulnerable. The list is not exhaustive but includes people:
 - 5.1.1. In need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect. Unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This includes all children and young people under 18.
 - 5.1.2. Belonging to a group within society that is either oppressed or more susceptible to harm.
 - 5.1.3. Aged 18 or older who have the functional, mental, or physical inability to care for themselves.



- 5.2. Some services may require a yellow card as part of employment. Currently congregations offering activities and programs for adults or children with disabilities **do not** require yellow cards. However, mandatory screening requirements **must** be met for all people working or volunteering in Church activities or programs for anyone vulnerable, including adults with disabilities.

6. Worker (paid or volunteer)

- 6.1. A person is a worker, if that person is aged over 18 years, and undertakes a paid or volunteer activity on a regular basis, including being scheduled on a roster to undertake a paid or volunteer activity.
- 6.2. Junior workers
- 6.2.1. A child or young person aged between 12 years and 18 years may undertake a volunteer activity as a junior worker after participating in a pre-appointment screening process suitable for their age, maturity, and ability.
- 6.2.2. All workers aged between 15 years and (under) 18 years must sign and complete a Junior Statement of Personal Commitment (SOPC) and complete relevant Safe Church Training, if assessed as having the level of maturity and ability to do so.
- 6.2.3. Note that Junior volunteers or junior leaders **are not** expected to follow the Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers, and Volunteers, and **are not** responsible for reporting suspected abuse, neglect or grooming, as they are children themselves. Junior Leaders must report to the activity or team leader if they notice that something is not right.

7. Child-related role

- 7.1. Under state legislation, child-related activities are those activities or programs which are provided only or mainly to children. All workers must comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy, including workers that meet the following criteria:
- 7.1.1. All First Aid Officers are required to hold a valid linked blue card or exemption card, in case emergency first aid treatment is required for anyone under 18 years of age.
- 7.1.2. All religious representatives, including persons studying to be a religious representative.
- 7.1.3. A worker that undertakes a child-related activity or task, on more than 7 calendar days per year.
- 7.1.4. A worker that is scheduled to undertake a child-related activity or task on a regular basis, ie is part of a roster for that volunteer task or activity.
- 7.1.4.1. Worship services and other activities aimed at only or mainly families, are not child-related activities, with the exception of some tasks that meet the threshold of a 'religious representative' defined in *Section 8*.
- 7.2. You will have additional responsibilities as part of your duty of care, if your role is not a child-related role, but you start supervising a volunteer under the age of 18. For example:
- 7.2.1. You coordinate the property maintenance. You do not usually need a blue card in this role, as this is not a child-related activity.
- 7.2.2. However, this year you have a volunteer aged 16 that has commenced volunteering, and whom you oversee.
- 7.2.3. As part of your duty of care to children and anyone vulnerable, you are now required to hold a Valid linked Blue Card whilst you remain in a role supervising a junior worker.

8. Threshold as a 'religious representative'

- 8.1. Under the Act, all persons considered to be a 'religious representative' must hold a valid linked Blue Card or Exemption Card. This includes a person who is training to become a religious representative. The roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a 'religious representative'.
- 8.2. Once the following threshold has been reached, the person is required to comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy, must hold a Blue Card or Exemption Card as a religious representative and must complete additional Lay Training specific to this role. This requirement remains the same for congregations which do not offer child-related activities.



- 8.3. The threshold - Once a volunteer performs the following ministerial functions on **more than** seven days in a calendar year:
- 8.3.1. Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or
 - 8.3.2. Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals); or
 - 8.3.3. Preside at the sacraments; or
 - 8.3.4. Perform any systematic pastoral care
- 8.4. For example:
- 8.4.1. A person is not a lay preacher as defined under *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulation 2.2.3*.
 - 8.4.2. However, the person takes on one or more of the above tasks or roles (*section 8.3 above*) on a regular or ongoing basis as there is no ministry agent in placement at their congregation.
 - 8.4.3. This person **must** comply with the additional requirements in *Section 8.2*, as they are now considered a 'religious representative'.

Roles tasks and responsibilities

9. Maintaining training records

- 9.1. All ministry agents, lay staff, lay preachers and volunteers are required to comply with the Safe Church Training Procedure.
- 9.2. The preferred method of completing SMC training is online, using the Synod learning platform, [edUCate](#). To use edUCate effectively:
 - 9.2.1. Provide a nominated member/s of your congregation with additional [edUCate](#) access. This will enable your congregation to enrol users in courses, check on course completion, and keep the congregation's volunteer training records up to date.
 - 9.2.2. Please contact the Learning and Development Team at learning@ucaqlld.com.au or 07 3377 9990, for more information or to obtain this access
- 9.3. Approved Safe Church Training Facilitators are available to provide face-to-face training for those courses only offered as face-to-face training and, in those circumstances, where online training is not suitable, including due to accessibility issues. Contact your Presbytery to find out when the next face-to-face Safe Church Training session is being offered.

10. Managing the blue card register/records

- 10.1. All lay workers and volunteers must comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy. Record keeping is an important part of keeping churches a safe place and is required by both Queensland legislation and UCA policy. For more information refer to the following:
 - 10.1.1. Blue Card Requirements of Ministry Agents
 - 10.1.2. Blue Card Requirements of Lay Workers, Lay Preachers, and Volunteers.
 - 10.1.3. The Synod [webpage](#) also has [prefilled forms](#) for ministry agents.
- 10.2. Congregations may choose to use the [Blue Card Services Portal](#) to manage their Blue Cards.
- 10.3. Some congregations prefer to use the Synod subscription of *UCare* for all record-keeping. For more information about *UCare*, contact onechurchconnect@ucaqlld.com.au or [One Church Connect](#).

11. Register of Workers

- 11.1. It's important to keep an up-to-date register or list of the workers (paid or volunteer) at your congregation. This is a requirement of Queensland legislation and UCA policy. The Synod offers a [Template](#) to help create a Register of Workers. Alternately church management software such as *UCare* can be used.



- 11.2. For more information about creating a Register of Workers please check the Safe Church webpage, [C/2.1.13.2 Information Required in a Register of Volunteers](#) or [Guidelines for a Register of Volunteers](#).

12. Recruitment and support of workers

- 12.1. Before any person can be appointed by the Church Council or work in paid or volunteer employment for the Church, a pre-appointment screening processes must occur. This includes:
- 12.1.1. Written application and declaration
 - 12.1.2. Interview/conversation
 - 12.1.3. Referee checks with two referees
 - 12.1.4. Linked blue card or exemption card (if working or volunteering with children other than junior volunteers)
 - 12.1.5. Completion of Safe Church Training
 - 12.1.6. Complete and sign a [Statement of Personal Commitment](#)
 - 12.1.7. Appointment to the role by the Church Council
- 12.2. To support workers (paid or volunteer) to continue serving the Church:
- 12.2.1. Complete an Annual Well-Being Check-In
 - 12.2.2. Linked blue card or exemption card (if working or volunteering with children other than junior volunteers)
 - 12.2.3. Completion of Safe Church Training
 - 12.2.4. Complete and sign a [Statement of Personal Commitment](#) each year
 - 12.2.5. Acknowledgement of the valuable contribution to the Church of volunteers serving the Church and their community via a Liturgy, special worships service to recognise volunteers, special morning tea after Church, special prayer, or similar.
- 12.3. To support workers (paid or volunteer) changing roles, or taking on new or additional roles:
- 12.3.1. Complete a New Starter Check-In
 - 12.3.2. Linked blue card or exemption card (if working or volunteering with children other than junior volunteers)
 - 12.3.3. Completion of Safe Church Training
 - 12.3.4. Complete and sign a [Statement of Personal Commitment](#)
 - 12.3.5. Appointment to the role by the Church Council
 - 12.3.6. Complete an Annual Well-Being Check-In
 - 12.3.7. Acknowledgement of the valuable contribution to the Church of volunteers serving the Church and their community via a Liturgy, special worships service to recognise volunteers, special morning tea after Church, special prayer, or similar.
- 12.4. For more information, please refer to the document [Selecting Leaders and Helpers](#).

13. Collating information and responding to the Annual Safe Church Audit

- 13.1. Each congregation is required to collate the congregation's records and respond to the Annual Safe Church Audit. The audit request is sent to each presbytery around 30 January each year, with a response required around 15 March of that same year. The Presbytery will forward the request to each congregation to respond and provide their records.
- 13.2. The congregation's records should be sent to the Presbytery for collation. The Presbytery will then forward the records to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer at the Synod Office. Please refer to the document "[Safe Church Annual Audit procedure for congregations and presbyteries](#)".
- 13.3. The following resources have been created to assist congregations and faith communities to meet their obligations:
- 13.3.1. [Obligations of Church Councils and Presbytery Committees offering child-related activities](#)
 - 13.3.2. [Obligations of Church Councils not offering child-related activities](#)
 - 13.3.3. [Blue Card Requirements for the Annual Safe Church Audit](#)
 - 13.3.4. [Pre-appointment Screening Requirements for the Annual Safe Church Audit](#)



14. New programs and activities

14.1. The following resources have been developed to assist congregations:

- 14.1.1. [Obligations when running a Children’s Camp](#)
- 14.1.2. [Obligations for Starting a Sunday School](#)
- 14.1.3. [UCA Requirements of visiting preachers and speakers.](#)

15. Risk assessments for all programs activities and events

15.1. All activities, programs and events must have a risk assessment completed prior to approval, as detailed in the process [Planning Safe Programs](#). The risk assessment must be submitted for approval by the Church Council or Presbytery Committee prior to the program, event or activity occurring. The following resources are available:

- 15.1.1. [Guidance Notes for Risk Assessments.](#)
- 15.1.2. Safe Church Training is available to assist with the process of pre-appointment recruitment and planning programs and activities.

15.2. Consultation must occur with Synod Support Services if activities with a final risk level of ‘extreme’ are being considered. If the activity is approved, any recommendations from Synod Support Services must be incorporated into risk assessment plans.

15.3. Synod support services:

- 15.3.1. The Queensland Synod Group Insurance team can assist with confirming [insurance](#) cover and activity conditions.
- 15.3.2. The Strategic Risk Manager can assist with risk management enquiries via compliance@ucaqld.com.au or 07 3377 9709.
- 15.3.3. Information and support is also available at Health.Safety@ucaqld.com.au or 07 3377 9703 or via the Synod [website](#).

16. Communication and feedback

16.1. Please provide any feedback around the training, resources or issues affecting safe church ministry at your congregation, to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer. This will help us improve the Safe Church resources and tools so that your congregation is supported to provide safe ministry.

Information and support

Information and support can be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 07 3377 9833 or safechurch@ucaqld.com.au.

Most training materials are now available online, using the Synod’s Learning Management System (LMS) [edUcate](#). For information or support to access online training, please contact the Learning and Development Team: 07 3377 9990 or learning@ucaqld.com.au.

Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.1.1			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
5.0	17.01.2024	Strategic Risk Manager	17.01.2024	Strategic Risk Manager	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		17.01.2024 Retired			